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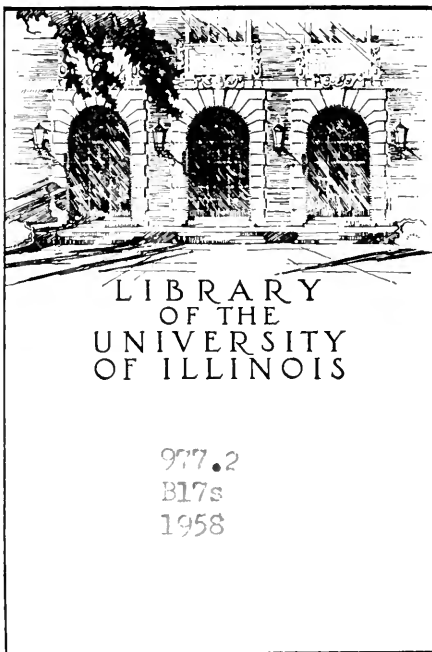
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THE ST. JOSEPH-KANKAKEE PORTAGE

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# THE ST. JOSEPH-KANKAKEE PORTAGE

ITS LOCATION AND USE BY MARQUETTE, LA SALLE  
AND THE FRENCH VOYAGEURS

BY

GEORGE A. BAKER,  
SECRETARY OF THE SOCIETY.



SOUTH BEND, INDIANA.  
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VIEW ALONG THE ST. JOSEPH-KANKAKEE PORTAGE PATH, SHOWING  
THE DEPTH TO WHICH THE TRAIL WAS WORN.

Photo taken in 1895.



PORTAGE LANDING ON THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER.  
From Sketch by Paul Seguin Bertault, Paris.

# THE ST. JOSEPH-KANKAKEE PORTAGE

ITS LOCATION AND USE BY MARQUETTE, LA SALLE,  
AND THE FRENCH VOYAGEURS.

By GEORGE A. BAKER.

Read before the Society, July 6, 1897.

*Jacque marquette.* Shortly after Easter Sunday, 1675, the sick and disheartened priest, Father Jacques Marquette,<sup>1</sup> left the Indian village of Kaskaskia to return to his beloved St. Ignace by a new route, which many eminent authorities believe to have been via the Kankakee River. In that case it is very probable that he and his two faithful attendants, Pierre Porteret and Jacques, made use of the portage between the Kankakee and St. Joseph Rivers—a carrying place of between four and five miles. The portage landing on the St. Joseph River<sup>2</sup> is two and three-quarters miles northwest of the court house, at South Bend, St. Joseph County, Indiana, and the portage extends in a southwesterly course to three small ponds which were the nearest sources of the Kankakee. The basins of these ponds are still clearly defined.

Early in December, 1679, LaSalle with Hennepin, Tonty and others, journeyed over this portage on their way to the Illinois country. It seems very probable that Allouez used it also, but this is denied by some authorities.

The earliest mention of this historic route is found in the writings of Father Louis Hennepin, Henry de Tonty and



1. Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography; Subject, Marquette.
2. River of the Miamis. The Mianis River. St. Joseph's River of the Lakes. St. Joseph's River. Big St. Joseph River of Lake Michigan. St. Joseph River.

Réné Robert Cavelier, Sieur de LaSalle,<sup>1</sup> who first made use of it as stated above in December, 1679. We are led to believe, however, that Louis Jolliet, companion of Marquette and co-discoverer of the Mississippi, knew of this portage as early as 1673.

In the early days the region in the vicinity of the portage, the valleys of the St. Joseph and the Kankakee, abounded in a great variety of fur-bearing animals. It was well known among the Indian tribes on account of its excellence as a hunting ground. Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac writing of the lower Peninsula of Michigan in 1701, says: "There are so many vast prairies dotted with woods, thickets and vines where the waters of the streams keep the shores always green and the reaper has left unmown the luxuriant grasses which fatten buffaloes of enormous size." The plain along the eastern bank of the St. Joseph river south of Niles, Michigan, was a noted buffalo resort known to the French as "Parc aux vaches" ; and to the Indians as "The cow-pasture," or "cow-pens." Further up the river the field west and south of the portage landing, was called at the time of the visit of Charlevoix in 1721, "La Prairie de Tete la Boeuf" (Buffalo Head Prairie).

All this region was a paradise for the Indian. A memoir prepared in 1718, for the French Government describes particularly the valley of the St. Joseph as follows: "'Tis a spot the best adapted of any to be seen for purposes of living. There are pheasants as in France; quails and paroquets;" the finest vines in the world which produce a vast quantity of very excellent grapes. It is the richest district in all the country." J. Fenimore Cooper, in his work, "The Bee-Hunter," calls the St. Joseph country or along the banks of the stream of that name, "A region that almost

1. René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, was born at Rouen, and his baptismal entry reads. "The 22nd, November 1643, was baptized Robert Cavelier, son of the Honorable Jean Cavelier and Catherine Geest." Parkman, Gravier and Margray traced the surname of de La Salle to an estate in the neighborhood of Rouen, at one time possessed by the Cavelier family. The Christian name René cannot be accounted for although it might perhaps be the name chosen at his confirmation, as is customary in the church of Rome.
2. Paris Documents published in Colonial History of the State of New York; Vol. 9; Page 890.
3. "Paroquet"—Carolina Paroquet. Prof. Amos W. Butler, in his work, Birds of Indiana, Indiana Geological Report, 1897; Page 819; says: "This beautiful little parrot was formerly found throughout Indiana. It was last reported from Knox County in 1859. It is now almost extinct in the United States, being at present only found in small numbers in Florida and in a few favorable locations in north-east Texas and Indian Territory.
4. Oak Openings, or The Bee-Hunter.

merits the lofty appellation of the Garden of America." Here with the buffalo were found the bear, the elk, the deer, the beaver, the otter, the marten, the raccoon, the mink, the muskrat, the opossum, the wild-cat, the lynx, the wolf and the fox.<sup>1</sup>

"For a century and a half fur was king." Here the *coureurs de bois*<sup>2</sup> carried on their trade<sup>3</sup> with great success. The rapidity with which they penetrated the forest recesses of this western country is among the wonders of history. No doubt it was from one of these men or from the Indians that Jolliet obtained his knowledge of the St. Joseph river, and without ever seeing it, placed it on his map of 1674.

These hardy sons of France, actuated only by the love of adventure and gain, seldom kept records even when capable of doing so. However it does seem very probable that the stories told by these adventurous traders returning from their various expedi-



From Jolliet's Map 1674.

1. Remains of all these fur-bearing animals have been found near the site of Fort St. Joseph, and are now in the collection of the Northern Indiana Historical Society.
2. The beginning of the XVII century was remarkable for an exodus to the western countries generally. In spite of the prohibition decreed by the government, these unlicensed commercial travelers or peddlers known as *coureurs de bois*, *engages*, *voyageurs*, peltry men and beaver men, were carrying on the business of exchange with the Indians in the remote regions in the heart of the forest, on the lakes and rivers. In 1681, these traders had become so numerous that the King concluded to grant them a general amnesty without reserve. Few returned despite this appeal. According to M. de Denonville, not only did these *coureurs de bois* depopulate the country of its fittest sons; but they themselves soon became intractable, undisciplined and licentious, demoralizing the Indians and bringing up their own children like those of the latter."—Désiré Girouard; "Lake St. Louis." Page 213.
3. The articles of merchandise used by the French traders in carrying on the fur-trade, were chiefly coarse blue and red cloth, fine scarlet, guns, powder, balls, knives, hatchets, traps, kettles, hoes, blankets, coarse cottons, ribbons, beads, vermilion, tobacco and spirituous liquors.

tions to this rich country, would soon become general property throughout the settlements along the St. Lawrence river. There is every reason to think that they knew the valleys of the St. Joseph and the Kankakee far better than their native land, and were acquainted with most of the trails leading to the different Indian villages as well as the portage, the great highway to the Kankakee.

The learned Bishop Bruté intimates, and I think rightly, that these adventurers had ascended and descended the St. Joseph river and visited the Indian villages on the Kankakee before Marquette founded the mission at Kaskaskia on the Illinois. Certain it is that these glowing descriptions of this western country by the *coureurs de bois*, returning to Montreal, and from the Indians, and from the report made by Jolliet to Frontenac, the governor-general who was most favorable to LaSalle's enterprise, that impelled him to undertake his great expedition to plant the *fleur de lis* in the Illinois country and along the Colbert (Mississippi) river. This country afterwards named Louisiana<sup>1</sup> in honor of the Grand Monarque, Louis XIV.

Reynolds, in his Pioneer History of Illinois, says: "Marquette and Jolliet on their return, made out such a glowing report that it set all Canada on fire and also swept over France like a tornado. The French, always excitable, caught the mania and became crazy to see and settle in the West. This rage for western enterprise reached LaSalle and bound him in its folds during the remainder of his life."

That the region of the portage was for centuries the home of the Indian, is evidenced by the thousands of imperishable relics<sup>2</sup> of their handicraft found at the present time throughout the valley of the St. Joseph and by hundreds of earthworks along the Kankakee and the small streams tributary to it. It is not hard for the student to believe that man in this region was coeval with

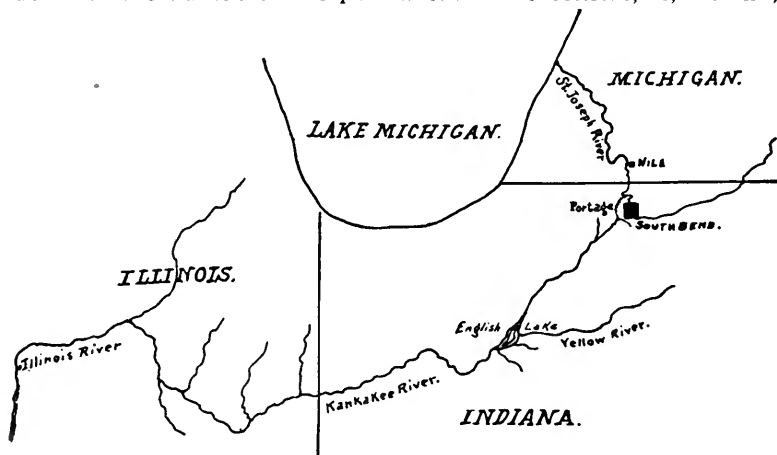
1. It is said by Charlevoix that the name of Louisiana was given by La Salle, who descended the Mississippi in the year 1682; but it is doubtful whether it can be found in any printed work before Hennepin's Description de la Louisiane, printed at Paris, 1683. This contains a dedication to Louis XIV, adulatory in the extreme; and it is believed the name was given for the same end. In this work, the Mississippi is called the Colbert river, after the King's great minister; and the name Seignelay to the Illinois and Kankakee after Colbert's son the Marquis de Seignelay, who had succeeded his father as Minister to the Colonies.
2. See collections of Chas. H. Bartlett, Ryell T. Miller, Basil Rupel, William B. Stover, George A. Baker, Chas. Schuell and Dr. Hugh T. Montgomery, of South Bend, Indiana.



VIEW OF PORTAGE TRAIL LOOKING SOUTH-WEST FROM ST. JOSEPH RIVER.  
From photograph by McDonald, South Bend.

the close of the Glacial epoch and contemporary with the mastodon,<sup>1</sup> the great elk and the giant beaver.<sup>2</sup>

It was probably after the final advance and during the withdrawal of the great Saginaw glacier, that the water-shed which causes the peculiar drainage of our immediate vicinity was established. It was across this plateau, that man in the early times made the portage from the waters that flowed into the St. Lawrence to the waters that flowed into the Gulf of Mexico, and which in the later days was used by the Indian, the explorers, the missionaries and the *coureurs de bois*. That a portage or carrying place which was the shortest and most convenient way would have been known to the Indian guides and have remained in use down to the advent of the permanent white settlers, is, I think,



LOCATION OF ST. JOSEPH-KANKAKEE PORTAGE.

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1. LeConte, in his *Elements of Geology*, says that the Mastodon roamed in herds over North America from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic regions. Many very perfect skeletons of the Mastodon have been obtained from marshes in New York, New Jersey, Indiana and Missouri. A splendid specimen was found a few years ago in the bed of an ancient marsh south-east of South Bend. Many fragments of skeletons have been found by ditchers in St. Joseph County and are now to be seen in private collections in South Bend.
2. The giant beaver, *Castorides Ohioensis*, was abundant in this region. The writer knows of two distinct specimens; one said to be the most perfect skull of this animal extant, was found ten miles north of South Bend, near Glendora, Michigan, and is now the property of the Museum of Natural History, Central Park, New York City. The other, a right upper incisor, was found in the Kankakee marsh, four miles south-west of South Bend, and is now in the collection of the writer.



quite obvious. Certainly such a route would be the one used by the *coureurs de bois*, *voyageurs* and others having canoes, heavy loads of peltries and merchandise to transport from river to river and would be the one of main travel. No one will deny that occasionally some lightly burdened traveler or hunter might make the portage by a longer or more circuitous route.<sup>1</sup>

The Kankakee region is a great, flat valley with an area of over sixteen hundred square miles, extending from the eastern border of the State of Illinois, northeast to the present site of the city of South Bend. It is a vast expanse of marsh, bordered by bayous, with little reaches here and there, connecting with innumerable little pools and spatter-dock ponds, which extended throughout the oozy, boggy soil; and except on occasional small sand islands and dotted pieces of woods in favorable localities along the banks of the river, it is destitute of timber, affording an unobstructed view for miles.

Through this flowed the sinuous Kankakee, (the Theakiki of the early French explorers,) draining this broad valley into the Illinois and thence into the Mississippi river.

Professor John L. Campbell, Chief Engineer of the commission appointed by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, April 11, 1881, to report on the improvement of the Kankakee river states in his memoir to the Governor: "The broad valley of the Kankakee marsh is doubtless the result of glacial action. At the close of the glacial period we may suppose that a shallow river extended from bank to bank of the valley. This stream had an average fall of one and three-tenths feet to the mile; and a consequent velocity rapid enough to take up the particles of fine sand and carry them forward. The retardation along the borders would cause the deposit of the sand, and thereby make the stream more narrow by the formation of banks. The narrowed and deepened stream would have an increased velocity and hence other masses of sand would be taken up by the current and carried forward to form obstructions in the general direction of flow. Following the lines of least resistance, the channel would be diverted from its original direction and would change from straight to crooked and continue to change so long as the velocity was too great for the stability of the sand bed over which the river flows. By these processes doubtless the Kankakee with its two thousand bends was formed." It was almost as easy to ascend as it was to descend, so sluggish was its current. It could be navigated as easily as a shallow lake making it a most desirable route for returning voyageurs heavily laden with their loads of bulky peltries.

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1. Via Chain Lakes and the Grapevine Creek.

The Kankakee was always a well defined river, and though crooked and shallow in many places, it was plainly distinguishable from the creeks and brooks which emptied into it.

Mr. Jacob Ritter, Mr. Robert G. Cissne and other well known settlers of St. Joseph County state that at certain seasons boats could be easily launched north of the main channel of the Kankakee thus shortening the portage by a mile or more. I want to call particular attention to this evidence as it harmonizes with the description of the portage route as given in the writings of Hennepin and La Salle, who state indirectly that the portage was longer during low water and shorter during high water.

The government survey of St. Joseph County, 1828-1830, clearly defines the outline of the Kankakee marsh. Immediately to the north it marks the confines of the semi-wet territory, and still further to the north, the outline of the dry prairie, which is now known as part of German township. The township immediately south of German is Portage, so called because the portage passed through it. The dry prairie was surrounded on the west, north and east by the original forest of white and black oak and hickory. On the south adjoining the semi-wet territory were scattered clumps of alders and willow bushes and shrubs as were native to such soils. The dry prairie extended west from the portage landing on the St. Joseph river, two and one-half miles, and two and one-quarter miles from the eastern verge of the prairie, or to about a line north and south between sections seven and eight, and sections thirty-one and thirty-two north, range two east. The timber line bordering this dry prairie extended to the north across the Indiana state line into Michigan. On the west and east it extended south following the west and east confines of the semi-wet prairie and the Kankakee marsh. The nearest approach of the east line of the dry prairie was between the north-east and south-west quarter of section twenty-seven, township thirty-eight, north range two east; and directly to the west by south of the present residence of Mrs. James R. Miller, making the distance as near as can be calculated, one quarter of a mile from the portage landing, as located in William Brookfield's field notes of the meanderings of the St. Joseph river; government survey run June 27, 1829.

Let us take a bird's eye view from the point where the prairie nearest approaches the St. Joseph river as it appeared in the early days, when the face of nature still remained essentially the same as when Hennepin and La Salle looked upon it. To the west and south the dry prairie, the semi-wet prairie and the vast expanse of marsh appeared as one great plain, on the western verge of which we can see the teepees, the smoke from numerous



VII  
VIEW OF PORTAGE TRAIL LOOKING SOUTH-WEST FROM ST. JOSEPH RIVER,  
SHOWING ASCENT TO HIGH GROUND.

From photograph by McDonald, South Bend.

camp-fires, and on closer inspection the rude fortifications of an Indian village of Miamis, Mascoutins and Outagamis. To the west of this rudely fortified village extended a stretch of high, rolling and dry timber land. To and beyond those beautiful and very conspicuous landmarks, Beaver, Bass and Lower Chain Lakes. It may be assumed that no careful writer accustomed to reciting a trip in detail would have failed to mention these lakes, covering over two miles of that trip, and whose waters covered in expanse over six hundred acres, had these lakes been on his route. The remains of the fortified Indian village referred to above were a prominent landmark with the pioneers who settled in German township. They were located on the northwest quarter of section thirty-two, township thirty-eight, north range two east, about two hundred yards east of the timber line, and about two hundred yards north of the present Michigan road and just to the northeast of the old Jesse Jennings residence. These earthworks consisted of a mound some eighty or ninety feet in diameter and from four to five feet in height. North of this mound was a circular embankment about one hundred feet in diameter. To the west from this enclosure was an elevated path or walk leading to a small pool which had no inlet or outlet, being supplied with water by the springs and the rain. Within the circular enclosure, Mr. Jacob Ritter built a cabin in 1830.

In order that those not acquainted with the appearance of the country west from the fortified village, I will quote from the field notes of the Government survey:

TOWNSHIP 38 N. R. 2 E.

Between Section 7 and 18, White and Burr Oak Timber;

- “ “ 18 and 19, Burr Oak;
- “ “ 19 and 30, Burr Oak 18 and 24 in. in diameter
- “ “ 30 and 31, Hickory 18 and 22 in. in diameter;
- “ “ 19 and 20, Burr Oak;
- “ “ 30 and 29, Burr Oak;
- “ “ 31 and 32, Burr Oak and Hickory.

Land rolling and dry.

TOWNSHIP 38 N. R. 1 E.

East boundary of Section 24, Burr Oak and Hickory 18 to 36 in. in diameter.

East boundary of Section 25, Burr Oak and Hickory;

East boundary of Section 36, White and Black Oak, 22, 24 and 36 in. in diameter.

Land rolling and dry.

In addition to this documentary evidence, we have the testimony of the very settlers who cleared this forest land and made it fit for cultivation, selecting it because it was rich and dry and

## THE ST. JOSEPH-KANKAKEE PORTAGE

because of the timber which they could use for fuel, rails and lumber.

The meanderings of the St. Joseph river, west side, run by William Brookfield, as given in his field notes are as follows:

Beginning on meandering post, between Sections 26 and 27; South 72½ degrees; west 11 chains. In Section 27 at four chains, fifty links; a brook twelve links wide, course N. W.

South 86 degrees; west two chains, fifty links;

North 45½ degrees; west six chains and fifty links; .

North 17 degrees; west two chains and fifty links. This is the portage landing of the Kankakee on the west bank of the St. Joseph river.

North 17½ degrees, east five chains and fifty links;

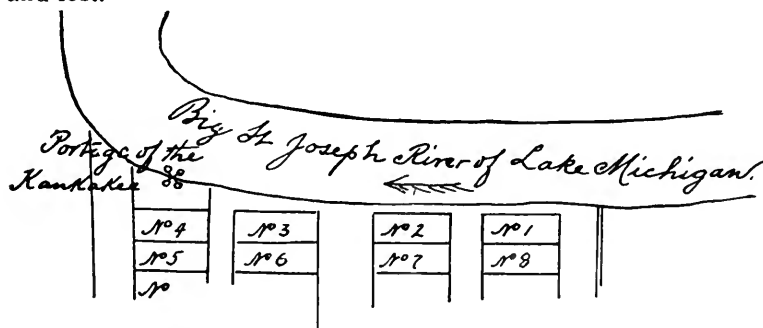
North 33 degrees; east five chains;

North 62 degrees; east ten chains;

North 76 degrees; east ten chains; at three chains a brook ten links wide, course east. (Witter's Branch).

North 64 degrees; east 69 links to meander post set between Section 26 and 27.

November 8, 1830, William Brookfield<sup>1</sup> filed with the Recorder of St. Joseph County, Lathrop M. Taylor, a plat of the town of St. Joseph, extending south from the landing as located in his field notes of the meanderings of the St. Joseph river. So there are to-day in existence, two distinct documents locating the exact spot of the landing on the St. Joseph. The following is a reduced copy of the plat of the town of St. Joseph, as drawn by Brookfield. It represents only a portion of the plat; the part pasted to a leaf in Book "A". The remainder of the plat has been torn out and lost.



PART OF BROOKFIELD'S PLAT OF TOWN OF ST. JOSEPH.

1. William Brookfield, a surveyor in the government employ, settled in this part of Indiana, and built a pioneer home on the St. Joseph river near the portage landing.

The South Bend Daily Tribune of January 26, 1895, speaking of the recording of this old plat, says: "One fact connected with the recording of this first town, is of great importance as a link in history; for it establishes beyond question the exact location of the old portage of the St. Joseph river; the spot where La Salle landed in 1679. In the Deed Record of the County Recorder's office, Book A, and on page 1, is a rumpled, mutilated plat of the town of St. Joseph, as laid out by William Brookfield. All is torn away by frequent handling, unfolding and folding of the rough map, except the part pasted to the book, which contains the river end; and there may be seen plainly indicated by pen-marks, at the point (farthest west), where the stream curves toward the north, the portage of the Kankakee. It is in the center of lot 4." The article continues as follows: "No doubt this first surveyor of our region, attracted by the striking beauty of this spot; knowing its historic value as the abiding place of the Indian for centuries, and as the white man's first landing place on the soil of St. Joseph county, fondly dreamed of building here a memorial in the shape of a town of a later-day civilization."<sup>1</sup>

The portage landing located and recently verified by a survey made from Brookfield's field notes, is just to the east of the big red barn, on the Miller property, south of the residence, and at the foot of a beautiful ravine declining gently from the high ground. At the water's edge, stretching back at least one hundred feet, is a low sandy terrace of recent formation. The approach to this picturesque ravine is obscure and hard to locate from the river; the view being obstructed by the forest trees. Many of the original trees are still standing; white-oaks, water-elm, wild locusts and many red-cedars the latter evidently being the progeny of a grand old cedar, a stately monarch of the portage landing, which reaches to the height of over sixty feet, with a girth of more than eight feet at its base.

The red cedar (*juniperus virginiana*) is known to be one of our slowest growing trees; seldom reaching the size of this giant of its species; and then only after many centuries of its life. The age of this tree is estimated as at least eight hundred years and was quite a tree at the time of the discovery of the continent. A white oak of about the same girth, which stands in its vicinity, and whose growth would be more rapid, has been estimated at from four hundred to four hundred and fifty years of age. The trunk of the old cedar, which stands just at the entrance to the ravine and very close to the old water line, has been covered by the sand and soil washed from above, to a depth of between seven

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1. This article was written by Richard H. Lyon, of South Bend, Indiana.



OLD CEDAR AT PORTAGE LANDING SHOWING RUDE BLAZED CROSS.



A SECTION OF BLAZED CEDAR TREE, TAKEN FROM LA SALLE'S LANDING AND NOW IN MUSEUM OF NORTHERN INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

and eight feet. In fact a number of neighboring trees have been similarly covered. Recently, June, 1879,<sup>1</sup> the soil around the old cedar was removed and the measurements as stated were made. As the trunk was laid bare, there was revealed something that had been lost to view for a hundred years or more. Three great blaze-marks, forming a rude cross, made by a wide-bladed axe,<sup>2</sup> such as were in common use in the French colonies. Here was what we had suspected, one of the witness trees marked no doubt in the early days to locate the portage landing. The blaze-marks are wide and deep and show great age. It is well known that the red cedar is among the slowest of woods to decay, owing to the preservative qualities of the resin it contains.

1. The cedar was uncovered by O. M. Knoblock and the writer.
2. La Salle's party no doubt had with them shipbuilder's wide-bladed axes. See Beckwith's article: "Land of the Illini."

I need hardly say how long ago these marks were placed upon this tree. It was certainly many decades ago; and it is very probable that this was one of the trees marked by Father Gabriel, who was at the portage with Hennepin and La Salle in 1679, and who it is stated by Hennepin, in his "Description de la Louisiane," marked several trees so that it would be easier to find the portage.

William Brookfield in running his section lines crosses the portage trail to the Kankakee and carefully notes its position and direction in two separate memoranda as follows:

1. On south boundary of Section 33, Township 38, North Range 2 east; at 41 chains, 93 links; a road, course south-west.

2. On random between Sections 8 and 17, Township 37, North Range 2 east; east 55 chains; Kankakee landing road, course south.

See map on page 15.

The location of the portage landing on the St. Joseph river as has been stated in this article, and the course of the trail indicated just above, is corroborated by such trust-worthy witnesses as Mr. Jacob Ritter,<sup>1</sup> who carried the chain for Brookfield; Mr. Robert G. Cissne,<sup>2</sup> who lived very near the portage landing in 1831, and who during that year met a French trader, with his Indian wife and children at the portage landing and hauled their effects over this trail to the landing on the Kankakee river. Brookfield's location of the portage landing is also corroborated by Mrs. James Hooten, of New Carlisle, who lived, when a girl,

1. The venerable Jacob Ritter told the writer in the spring of 1897, that he helped William Brookfield, the Government Surveyor, in his work. He carried the chain for him. He also said that the landing to the Kankakee was at the point as located in Brookfield's notes, and the path led to the south-west to a little branch of the Kankakee. When asked if he knew of any Indian trail leading west from the old earthworks on the Jennings place, he said: "I built my little cabin in the circular enclosure in 1830; lived there for several years, and then moved one mile north, where I built a more permanent residence. I am perfectly familiar with all the country thereabout; knew all my neighbors, and I never saw or heard of a portage trail leading west to Chain Lakes."
2. Mr. Robert G. Cissne, who has resided on Portage Prairie since 1831, said that the portage landing was directly east of the residence of James R. Miller. "It was on the west bank of the St. Joseph river, at the foot of a natural ravine. I hauled the effects of a French trader from this point over the old trail to the landing on the Kankakee in 1831. I know nothing of any trail to the Grapevine or Chain Lakes, and do not think there was one. There was a trail leading south from Leopold Pokagon's village, on the edge of Michigan, by way of the Military road to Chain Lakes and Sauk Town."



where the James R. Miller residence now stands; by Mr. George Witter; Mrs. George Witter;<sup>1</sup> Mr. Jacob Cripe;<sup>2</sup> Mr. William O. Jackson and by many other well known pioneer settlers.

A careful examination<sup>3</sup> of the field notes of the government survey reveal but one portage trail from the St. Joseph river; and no pioneer settler in St. Joseph County has knowledge of any other one. Hence we are led to believe that this trail, so carefully outlined when the country was unchanged and authenticated by living witnesses, the shortest, the most convenient at all seasons, one with very few obstacles and which harmonizes in every particular with the descriptions by the earliest writers, was the one used for ages and the one that was traversed by the early explorers and missionaries and by them made historic.

In the Jesuit Relations de la Nouvelle France 1673-1675 (original by Claude Dablon preserved at the College Ste. Marie at Montreal), there is an account of Marquette's death, but no indication is given of his route from the mission at Kaskaskia; the only mention of a route being that the Indians who accompanied him went beyond a portage, where they left him on his journey.

Mr. Justin Winsor, librarian of Harvard College, a most careful investigator and the author of a number of standard historical works, makes the following statement in a letter as follows:

Cambridge, Mass., March 23, 1896;

Dear Sir:—

In my Cartier to Frontenac, I said that Marquette returned by the portage, without indicating which one, because I could find no positive evidence to establish that point. Returning traders and missionaries usually followed the eastern side of Lake Michigan because they got some aid from a north-flowing shore current on that bank of the lake; and for a like reason they usually advanced towards the Illinois country by the western side of the lake. In that case they naturally used, in going, the Chicago portage, and would naturally use, in returning, the St. Jo-

1. Mr. and Mrs. George Witter, residents of Portage Prairie for years, both say they never heard of a portage path by way of Chain Lakes. If there had been one, it could not have been used to any extent. Mr. Witter remembers distinctly the portage landing east of James Miller's house. He had washed sheep there many times in an early day. The path leads south-west to the Kankakee. There was no trail in any direction leading from the little brook known as Witter's Branch.
2. Mr. Jacob Cripe says that when he was a boy the portage was always referred to as the Indian path. The deep gully on the Myler place was washed out in the early sixties.
3. A careful examination of the field notes of Brookfield, was made by the Hon. David R. Leeper.

seph portage. Still they could pass north by the Chicago portage, and make the circuit of the southern curve of the lake. It seems possible that Marquette did this, but probable that he went north by the other portage (St. Joseph).

Very truly,

JUSTIN WINSOR.

To Geo. A. Baker, South Bend, Ind.

In reading this statement we must bear in mind that there is probably to-day no one who is better informed regarding the early history of America than Mr. Winsor. His opinion as to the use of our St. Joseph river portage by Marquette on his return voyage in 1675, is shared by such eminent authorities as Mr. John Gilmary Shea; Hon. Thomas Weadock, author of the *Life of Marquette*; by Mr. Charles Green, Secretary of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society; by Mr. Edward G. Mason, President of the Chicago Historical Society; by Mr. R. H. Clark, and by many other noted historians.

Mr. John Gilmary Shea, in his "Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley," including the "Life of Marquette," page 520, says: "He seems to have taken the way by the St. Joseph's river and reached the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, along which he had not yet sailed."

Mr. Thomas Weadock, in his "Life of Marquette," says, after speaking of the founding by Marquette of the Mission of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin at Kaskaskia: "The object he had cherished for years was attained—he had founded the Illinois mission. His work was done; he was ready to die. But he wished to die among his brethren, with the rites of holy church; so he set out on his return voyage going by St. Joseph's river and the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. Gradually his strength failed, and at last he had to be lifted out of the canoe when they stopped for the night. He calmly contemplated the approaching change with that pious serenity which became a Christian missionary. It is a characteristic of great minds, whether pagan, philosopher or Christian man, that they can so look upon death without fear. Père Marquette spoke of his approaching end, and gave his attendants instructions so calmly they thought he was speaking of another." Near the promontory of the Sleeping Bear, on the banks of what is since known as Père Marquette river, he died, May 18, 1675, aged 38 years." Near the place of his death he was buried by his two loving followers; then they proceeded on their journey to the Straits.

Two years afterwards a party of Kiskakons, former disciples of Marquette, sought out his grave. Placing his bones in a birch box they reverently conveyed them to St. Ignace.





LA SALLE AT THE PORTAGE.  
December 5, 1679.



LA SALLE AT THE MIAMI TREATY.  
March, 1681.

THE ABOVE MURAL PAINTINGS ARE PLACED IN THE ROTUNDA OF  
THE ST. JOSEPH COUNTY COURT HOUSE, SOUTH BEND, INDIANA.  
Painted in 1898 by Arthur Thomas.

In a history of Berrien county, Michigan, published in 1880, by D. W. Ensign & Co., of Philadelphia, speaking of Marquette's last voyage and the establishment of his mission, we find: "About the middle of April he set out, accompanied by his two Frenchmen, Pierre and Jacques, and with several Indian guides, to go to Lake Michigan by a different route from that one which he had passed in his previous journeys, intending to strike the lake on its eastern side and to pass northward along that shore to Michillimackinac. The sick priest and his party took their way up the Illinois river to the mouth of the Kankakee, and thence up the latter stream to a point near its head, where they landed and crossed a portage of five or six miles in length, which brought them to the waters of a stream to which they gave the name of 'River of the Miamis,' because they found the principal village of that Indian tribe located a short distance south of it." "The place where the Jesuit and his followers reached the St. Joseph (River of the Miamis) is near the present city of South Bend, Indiana, and from that point they passed down the river in their canoes to its mouth, where the village of St. Joseph now stands."

Mr. R. H. Clark, in the *Catholic World*, Vol. XVI., page 699, says of Marquette's return: "Taking the way of the St. Joseph's river and the eastern shore of Lake Michigan," etc.

Mr. Charles Green says: "I think there is no doubt but that Marquette descended the St. Joseph river on his return from his last voyage."

Mr. Thomas Weadock also states, in a letter, regarding Marquette's route: "His canoe route would be by the Kankakee and St. Joseph," thus avoiding the dangers and privations of the voyage around the bleak and sand duned southern curve of the lake.

There is no doubt that his Indian guides were familiar with this route, and long knew of the easy access to the eastern shores of Lake Michigan by way of the Kankakee and the portage to the St. Joseph river, and in their solicitation for his health told him of the beauties of this route and of the abundance of game; and remembering the ice-bound coast and the scarcity of food along the Chicago route, the sick and disheartened priest was easily won over to the advisability of taking this route.

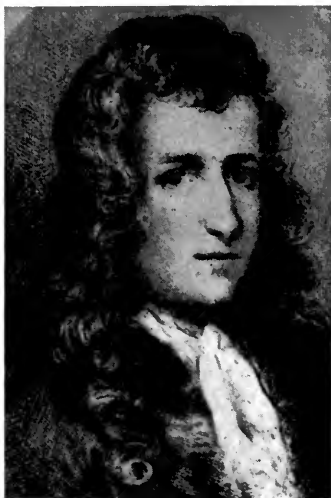
The weight of testimony of the best authority, is that Marquette made use of the St. Joseph-Kankakee portage.

It has been suggested that when the Northern Indiana Historical Society marks with a monument the historic highway, via the Kankakee and St. Joseph river, the name of the illustrious Jesuit be inscribed thereon with the name of the brave explorer, La Salle.

The main events subsequent to La Salle's advent on Lake Michigan,<sup>1</sup> it is to be presumed, are known to most of us. Hence I will confine this article to details bearing more or less on Lake Michigan, the St. Joseph river and the portage to the Kankakee, in which La Salle and others took part.

H. W. Beckwith, member of the Chicago Historical Society, in an article on "Land of the Illini," says: "La Salle's canoes, (which had been loaded with the forge, bellows, anvil, blacksmith tools, iron for nails, an outfit of ship's carpenter and joiner tools, a pit-saw for sawing planks, with arms and merchandise), with fourteen men and three missionaries, having coasted the west shore and southern trend of Lake Michigan, arrived at the St. Joseph river on Nov. 1st, 1679. Here they should have met Henry de Tonty, the second in command, whose division was to come by the eastern shore of the lake, the much shorter route. He had been sent up to the trade and mission post at the head of the Sault St. Marie, to catch and bring in two men who had run away from service. This work and a series of mishaps, needless here to recount, detained him and seriously delayed the whole expedition. While waiting for Tonty, La Salle occupied his men in building a storehouse and fort<sup>2</sup> on the crown of a sandhill that skirted the southern shore of the river's mouth, to serve for a security for the Griffin,<sup>3</sup> with the supplies it was to bring, as well as a place of refuge for the men in case of need. This work was called Fort Miami. To assure a safe harbor for the vessel, La Salle sounded the river mouth and marked its either side with two tall poles with bear-skin pendants and with buoys all along. Finally towards the last of November, Tonty came with all his men; and on December third, the united force, numbering twenty-eight all told, and eight canoes, began the ascent of the St. Joseph. Four men were left behind; two<sup>4</sup> at the Fort to give no-

1. See Parkman's *Discovery of the Great West*, and Spark's *Life of Chevalier de La Salle*.
2. A breastwork of hewn logs, enclosing a space eighty by forty feet, which for greater security was surrounded by palisades. See Hennepin's *Description de la Louisiane*.
3. La Salle's vessel was named the Griffin, in compliment to the Count de Frontenac, the Governor of Canada, whose armorial bearings were adorned by two griffins as supporters.
4. This is according to the statement of Le Clercq. Hennepin does not mention this fact, and it is not probable that so small a number would have been left at the fort, exposed to the attacks of roving savages. There seems to be no good reason for questioning the accuracy of Hennepin's narrative, concerning La Salle's first trip on the St. Joseph river. Forty-two years afterwards, Charlevoix traveled over the same route and his description of natural objects, the course of the river and distances, agree very closely with that of Hennepin.



*Cavelier de la salle*

Fac-simile of signature to deed written at the mouth of the St. Joseph River December 2, 1682, when LaSalle conveyed certain lands to M. Accault.

tice in case the Iroquois savages invaded the Illinois country, as La Salle feared. The other two, Nicolas Laurent, nicknamed La Chapelle, and Noel le Blanc, a ship-carpenter, were to go back looking for the Griffin as far as Mackinac, and if they found it, to inform the pilot of the arrangements and assist him in guiding the vessel into the harborage named. After the portage from the St. Joseph was made, and the Kankakee and Illinois rivers were coursed, the voyagers came to the great Illinois village that skirted the northern shore for nearly two miles down to and opposite le Rocher (the rocks, or Starved Rocks.)”

La Salle's party which ascended the St. Joseph river is variously estimated by different authorities, at from twenty-eight to thirty-four. Following, I give their names so far as can be ascertained:

Réné Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle.

Chevalier Henry de Tonty, La Salle's Lieutenant, an Italian by birth, who had been for several years in the French army and had lost a hand in the service. He was a son of the great financier who invented the Tontine, a method of life insurance, adopted in France.

Oui-oui-la-mech (wee-wee-le-meck) a Mohegan Indian, and La Salle's guide.

John Boisrondet, La Salle's Private Secretary and Accountant.  
L' Espérance de la Brie, La Salle's body servant.

Father Louis Hennepin.

Father Gabriel de la Ribourde.

Father Zénobe Membré, religious teacher.

Jean Russell (La Rousseliere) La Salle's partner at La Chine.

Michel Accault (Ako), afterwards a trader.

John Francis Bourdon, afterwards Sieur d'Antray, a son of  
John Bourdon, Attorney General and Chief Engineer of  
Canada.

Anthony Augelle, (Picard du Gay.)

Etienne Renault, the Parisian.

La Violette, of Lyons.

Moyse Hilleret, the master ship builder.

Jean le Mire, a ship carpenter.

Jean Mielleor, (La Forge), the nail maker.

Andrew Henault.

Colin Crevell.

Nicholas Crevell.

Nicholas Laurent.

Jacques Messier.

Jean Richeon.

Martin Chartier.

Nicholas Duplessis.

Jean La Croix.

Michel Baribault.

Bois d'Ardeene.

John Gilmary Shea, on page three hundred and twenty-three of his work, entitled "The Catholic Church in Colonial Days," says: "La Salle's party; accompanied by a New England Indian guide, reaching the mouth of the St. Joseph river, La Salle during the month of November, 1679, threw up a rude fort and in it built a bark cabin, the first Catholic Church in the lower peninsula of Michigan. It was apparently dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, as he had promised on the voyage to dedicate the first chapel to that saint."

To continue the narrative of this trip, I will review the versions familiar to American readers; citing first from Justin Winsor's "Cartier to Frontenac," page 264.

"On December 3rd, 1679, La Salle with eight canoes and thirty-three men, started up the St. Joseph river. There was nothing to cheer them in the stretch of dreary fields and bare woods which lined the river's channel. His anxiety about the Griffin weighed him down throughout the seventy sad miles. For a while he despaired of finding the portage; at last it was discov-



ered, and there was a severe haul over five miles of stiffened ooze. When they once more launched their canoes on the Kankakee, they slipped along with the welcome current through open prairies."

From Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History of America," Vol. IV., Page 224; edition 1884: "They now together went up the St. Joseph River and, crossing the portage, launched their canoes on the Kankakee."

On page 25, Mr. Winsor in his work "The Mississippi Basin" says: "In the southeast angle of the lake (Michigan), was the portage of the St. Joseph river, which La Salle was much accustomed to traverse. There was by it about four miles of carriage to the Kankakee."

Francis Parkman in his "Discovery of the Great West," says:

"He, (La Salle) pushed on, however, circling around the southern shore of Lake Michigan, till he reached the mouth of the St. Joseph. Here Tonty was to have rejoined him, with twenty men, making his way from Michillimackinac, along the eastern shore of the lake; but the rendezvous was a solitude; Tonty was nowhere to be seen. It was the first of November. Winter was at hand and the streams would soon be frozen. The men clamored to go forward, urging that they should starve if they could not reach the village of the Illinois before the tribe scattered for the winter hunt. La Salle was inexorable. If they should all desert, he said, he, with his Mohegan hunter and the three friars, would still remain and wait for Tonty. The men grumbled, but obeyed; and, to divert their thoughts, he set them at building a fort of timber, on a raising ground at the mouth of the river.

"They had spent twenty days at this task, and their work was well advanced, when at length Tonty appeared. He brought with him only half of his men. Provisions had failed; and the rest of his party had been left thirty leagues behind, to sustain themselves by hunting. La Salle told him to return and hasten them forward. He set out with two men. A violent north wind arose. He tried to run his canoe ashore through the breakers. The two men could not manage their vessel, and he with his one hand could not help them. She swamped, rolling over in the surf. Guns, baggage and provisions were lost; and the three voyagers returned to the Miamis, subsisting on acorns by the way. Happily, the men left behind, excepting two deserters, succeeded, a few days after, in rejoining the party.

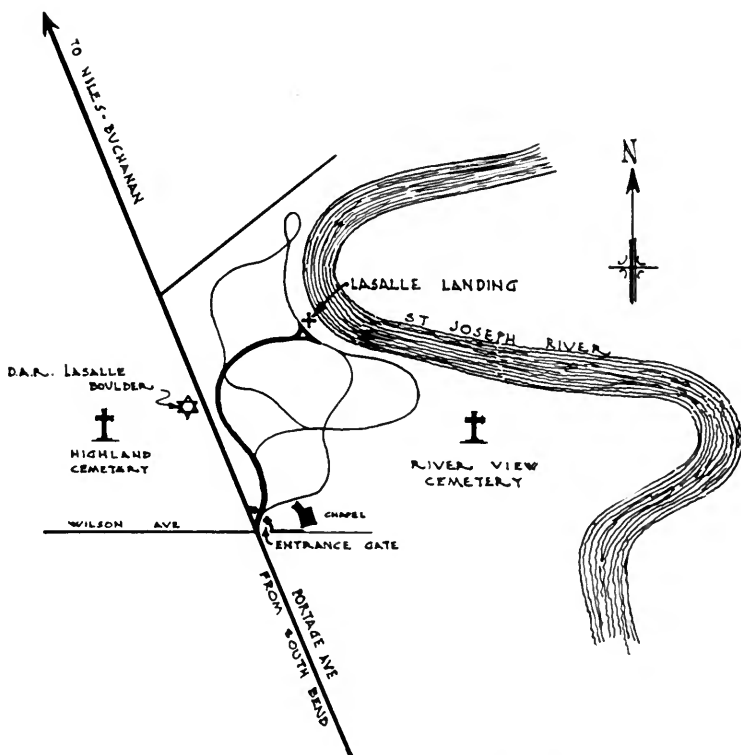
"Thus was one heavy load lifted from the heart of La Salle. But where was the 'Griffin?' Time enough, and more than enough, had passed for her voyage to Niagara and back again.

He scanned the dreary horizon with an anxious eye. No returning sail gladdened the watery solitude, and a dark forboding gathered on his heart. Yet farther delay was impossible. He sent back two men to Michillimackinac to meet her, if she still existed, and pilot her to his new fort of the Miamis, and then prepared to ascend the river, whose weedy edges were already glassed with thin flakes of ice.

"On the third of December, the party re-embarked, thirty-three in all, in eight canoes, and ascended the chill current of the St. Joseph, bordered with dreary meadows and bare gray forests. When they approached the site of the present village of South Bend, they looked anxiously along the shore on their right to find the portage or path leading to the headquarters of the Illinois. The Mohegan was absent, hunting; and unaided by his practiced eye, they passed the path without seeing it. La Salle landed to search the woods. Hours passed, and he did not return. Hennepin and Tonty grew uneasy, disembarked, bivouacked, ordered guns to be fired, and sent out men to scour the country. Night came, but not their lost leader. Muffled in their blankets and powdered by the thick-falling snow-flakes, they sat ruefully speculating as to what had befallen him; nor was it till four o'clock of the next afternoon that they saw him approaching along the margin of the river. His face and hands were besmirched with charcoal; and he was farther decorated with two opossums, which hung from his belt, and which he had killed with a stick as they were swinging head downwards from the bough of a tree, after the fashion of that singular animal. He had missed his way in the forest, and had been forced to make a wide circuit around the edge of a swamp;' while the snow, of which the air was full, added to his perplexities. Thus he pushed on through the rest of the day and the greater part of the night, till about two o'clock in the morning he reached the river again and fired his gun as a signal to his party. Hearing no answering shot, he pursued his way along the bank, when he presently saw the gleam of a fire among the dense thickets close at hand. Not doubting that he had found the bivouac of his party, he hastened to the spot. To his surprise, no human being was to be seen. Under a tree beside the fire was a heap of dry grass impressed with the form of a man who must have fled but a moment before, for his couch was still warm. It was, no doubt an Indian, ambushed on the bank, watching to kill some passing enemy. La Salle called out in several Indian languages; but there was dead silence all around. He then, with admirable coolness, took possession of

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1. Evidently the swamp near Mishawaka, Indiana, four miles above South Bend.



MAP OF RIVERVIEW AND HIGHLAND CEMETERIES, IN SOUTH BEND  
SHOWING THE RELATIVE POSITION OF LA SALLE'S LANDING.

the quarters he had found, shouting to their invisible proprietor that he was about to sleep in his bed; piled a barricade of bushes around the spot, rekindled the dying fire, warmed his benumbed hands, stretched himself on the dried grass and slept undisturbed till morning.

"The Mohegan had rejoined the party before La Salle's return and with his aid the portage was soon found. Here the party encamped. La Salle, who was fatigued, occupied, together with Hennepin, a wigwam covered in the Indian manner with mats of reed. The cold forced them to kindle a fire, which before day-break set the mats in a blaze; and the two sleepers narrowly escaped being burned along with their hut.

"In the morning the party shouldered their canoes and baggage and began their march for the sources of the River Illinois, some five miles distant. Around them stretched a desolate plain, half covered with snow, and strewn with the skulls and bones of buffalo; while, on its farthest verge, they could see the lodges of the Miami Indians, who had made this place their abode. They soon reached a spot where the oozy, saturated soil quaked beneath their tread. All around were clumps of alder bushes, tufts of rank grass and pools of water. In the midst, a dark and lazy current, which a tall man might bestride, crept twisting like a snake among the weeds and rushes. Here were the sources of the Kankakee, one of the heads of the Illinois. They set their canoes on this thread of water, embarked their baggage and themselves, and pushed down the sluggish streamlet, looking at, a little distance, like men who sailed on land. Fed by an unceasing tribute of the spongy soil, it quickly widened to a river; and they floated on their way through a voiceless, lifeless solitude of dreary oak barrens or boundless marshes, overgrown with reeds. At night, they built their fire on ground made firm by frost and bivouacked among the rushes. A few days brought them to a more favored region."

Jared Sparks, in his *Life of "Chevalier de la Salle,"* says: "Having waited as long as prudence would admit, La Salle resolved to go forward. Ice had formed in the river, but it was dissolved by a favorable change of the weather. On the 3rd of December the whole party, consisting of thirty-three persons, took their departure from the fort in eight canoes and ascended to the portage. The distance was about seventy miles. Although a canoe had before gone up the river to search for the portage, yet its exact position had not been ascertained. The *Sieur de La Salle* landed to explore the country above, and was gone so long that his companions began to be alarmed for his safety. While he was wandering at some distance from the river, hoping to dis-

cover the source of the eastern branch of the Illinois, he fell upon marshy grounds covered with thick bushes, which compelled him to take a large circuit, and darkness overtook him on his way. He fired his gun, but the signal was not answered. By good luck, however, he espied a light not far off, which he approached, and found near the fire a bed of leaves, upon which a man had been reposing, probably an Indian, who startled at the sound of the gun, had made a precipitate escape. Weary with the fatigue of the day, and chilled by the falling snow, La Salle at once came to the resolution of appropriating these comfortable quarters to himself for the night. Cutting down the bushes, and so arranging them around his little encampment that no one could approach without making a noise that would arouse him from his slumbers in time for defense, he threw himself upon the couch of leaves and slept undisturbed until morning. In the afternoon he rejoined his companions, who were overjoyed at his safe return. Two opossums were hanging from his belt, which he had killed with a club while suspended by their tails from the branches of trees. Two days had passed in an unsuccessful search for the portage. At last the faithful Indian hunter, who had been out to look for deer, came in and told them where it was, and that they had gone too far up the river. By his aid the place was found, and the canoes and all their contents were carried over a distance of five or six miles to the head-waters of the Kankakee. The precaution had been taken to leave letters hanging from branches of trees in conspicuous places, both at the fort and the portage, containing instructions for the captain of the Griffin, in case he should arrive. For nearly a hundred miles from its source the Kankakee winds through marshes, which afford growth to little else than tall rushes and alders. A more desolate scene in the midst of winter could hardly be imagined. At length the canoes floated on the waters of the Illinois, after a voyage of three hundred miles by the windings of the Kankakee from the portage."

Reynolds, in his "Pioneer History of Illinois," page 17, says: "At Green Bay the Griffin was loaded with furs and sent to Niagara, while LaSalle, with fourteen men, started for the Miamis, or St. Joseph river. There the party waited for the return of the Griffin. At this point LaSalle built a fort. The party, on the 3rd of December, consisting of thirty laborers and three monks, went up the St. Joseph, crossed the portage to the Theaukeki, now Kankakee, and down to the Illinois river."

From Abbot's "The Adventures of Chevalier de LaSalle and His Companions." page 123, edition 1875, we quote: "On the 3rd of December the whole party of thirty-three persons, in eight canoes, left Fort Miami, as LaSalle called his works, and paddled

up the river a distance of seventy miles towards the south. Considerable time was lost in endeavoring to find the trail or portage which led from the St. Joseph river to the head-waters of the Kankakee, which is the eastern branch of the Illinois river. At length their Indian hunter found the trail; the men took the canoes and freight upon their shoulders and carried them over the portage of five or six miles, which the Indians had traversed for countless ages. Dreary in the extreme was the wintry landscape which now opened before them; the ground was frozen hard; ice fringed the stream, and the flat, marshy expanse was whitened with snow. For nearly a hundred miles the sluggish Kankakee flowed through a morass which afforded growth to but little more than rushes and alders."

From Sidney Breese's "History of Illinois," page 105, we take the following: "By Hennepin's narrative it would seem that having left the mouth of the Miamis on the second day of December, 1679, they rowed twenty-five leagues (seventy-five miles) in a southwest direction, and reached the Illinois (Kankakee), navigable for canoes to within one hundred paces of its source."

Bancroft, in his "History of the United States," Vol. II., page 163, says: "La Salle, with Louis Hennepin and two other Franciscans with Tonti, and about thirty followers, ascended the St. Joseph, and after one short portage entered a branch of the Kankakee, which connects with the Illinois."

"Dunn's Indiana," on page 26, contains the following statement: "La Salle's movements in 1679 and 1680, had little to do with Indiana, except that the St. Joseph and Kankakee rivers were his customary route of travel to Illinois, the portage being made at the site of South Bend."

In Perkins' "Annals of the West," on page 37, we find this statement: "On the third of December, 1679, having mustered all his forces, thirty laborers and three monks, after having left ten men to garrison the fort, La Salle started again upon his great voyage and glorious undertaking, ascending the St. Joseph river in the southwestern part of Michigan to a point where, by a short portage, they pass to the Theaukiki, now corrupted into Kankakee, a main branch of the Illinois river."

In an article entitled "Cavelier de La Salle," which appeared in the Chicago Times, Feb. 25, 1882, we find the following: "After great suffering and many thrilling adventures, they reached the mouth of the St. Joseph river, and after waiting, were joined by Tonty, whom La Salle had sent to Sault Ste. Marie from Mackinaw, to look after his fur gatherers. The 3rd of December the expedition began the ascent of the St. Joseph river, near the site of the present City of South Bend, Indiana. The canoes, eight in number, were carried across to the Kankakee."

The above citations are about all we have of the details of La Salle's first trip through this region, when he made use of our portage, as told by American historians. From these accounts it appears that the portage landing was obscure and difficult to locate, and that, when found, the distance was estimated at twenty-five leagues by some, and from seventy to seventy-five miles by others from the mouth of the St. Joseph river, and that the portage was across a vast plain, a part of which was a quaking, oozy bog; that on the western verge of the plain was located an Indian village; that the portage was variously estimated at from four to six miles in length; that the source of the Kankakee was in the midst of a quaking, saturated soil, all around which were pools or ponds of glistening water, and that it was navigable to within one hundred paces of its source. It also appears that Francis Parkman, the historian, who went over the trail in the year 1848, graphically describes the portage and the Kankakee river; also the ponds or pools, which are still in existence, and states in particular that here were the sources of the Kankakee; all of which harmonizes in every detail with the portage as outlined by the Government Surveyor and by the testimony of living witnesses.

No other stream was known as the Kankakee at the time of Parkman's visit, nor before, back as far as 1828, the time of the Government survey.<sup>1</sup> All the streams in this county were well known by their present names. We can hardly believe that a careful writer like Francis Parkman, who verified every statement<sup>2</sup> he made by personally examining every locality that came into his story, could err in this particular vital point of the portage, especially as this description of this part of La Salle's trip was the cause of his visit to this locality.

Fortunately, we have access to the documents, the very source from which our historians have taken their accounts of La Salle's use of the portage; and I will later cite the evidence from these documents in order that those who are acquainted with the topography of this region may form a correct idea as to the location of the portage as described by the actual explorers. In this place we give a list of the original sources. 1. Description de la Louisiane, par le R. P. Louis Hennepin; Paris Ed., 1687, taken from the volume owned by the Chicago Public Library. 2. John Gilmary Shea's translation of Hennepin's "Description de la Louisiane," of the Paris Ed., 1683. 3. From Le Clercq's "Establishment of the Faith in New France," Paris Ed., 1691. 4. From

1. But three streams are mentioned by name in the Survey by Brookfield; viz., the St. Joseph river, the Kankakee river and the Grapevine creek.
2. See Life of Francis Parkman, by Julius H. Ward, published in McClure's Magazine—Vol. II, page 185.

Memoir by the Sieur de la Tonti, "On the Discovery of the Mississippi and the Neighboring Nations," by M. de La Salle, from the year 1678 to the time of his death; published in French's "Historical Collections of Louisiana," N. Y. Ed., 1846. 5. "La Salle's Dairy," library of Chicago Historical Society. 6. From "Charlevoix's Letters," dated on the St. Joseph river, August 16, 1721, and "On the Source of the Theakiki," September 17, 1721, to the Madame la Duchesse de Lesdiquiers, Paris Ed., 1744, and London Ed., 1763; from copies in the Boston Athenæum. 7. From Daniel Cox's "Carolania." 8. From a "Memoir on the Indian Tribes Between Lake Erie and the Mississippi River," Paris document, 1718, contained in the Colonial History of New York, Vol. IX., page 889.

We will also present reproductions of the early maps on which are traced the St. Joseph river, the Kankakee river, together with the location of the portage as drawn by the early writers and explorers.

Before we can intelligently analyze the several accounts and harmonize them with present day surveys, we must know with some degree of certainty the equivalent of the itinerary or linear French league in English miles; for these early writers made use of the league in stating distances. It is remarkable how they were able to estimate distances; especially distances on land. Distances by water they did not estimate with such accuracy. No doubt the currents and winds had something to do with this; but even these estimates harmonize in a marvelous degree. The league in use in New France, and used by La Salle, Hennepin, Tonty and Charlevoix, was the old French itinerary or linear league; the league now in use in all the seigniories in Canada. It was the equivalent of 3.052 English or statute miles.

Mr. Reuben G. Thwaites, Secretary of the Wisconsin Historical Society, says, in a note on page 268, Vol. IV., of the new edition of "The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents": "The linear arpent of Paris was 180 feet (variously computed at from 191.83 to 192.3 English feet). This was the one used in New France under the *Coutume de Paris*, and it still remains the legal measure in all the seigniories of Quebec. The Quebec Department of Crown lands, which we adopt as authority, translates the arpent into 191.85 feet." Parenthetically, Mr. Thwaites states in his note that there are 84 arpents in a French league.

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary states that the league is a measure of length or distance equal in England and the United States to three geographical miles.

Mr. N. E. Dionne, Librarian of the Bibliothèque de la Législature, de la Province de Quebec, regarded as the highest authority on these matters, says, in a letter dated Quebec, June 2, 1897:





D. A. R. MARKER PLACED ON THE LINE OF THE PORTAGE.  
Erected in October, 1923.

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TO GEO. A. BAKER.

"DEAR SIR:—After having consulted persons of great ability on the question, I may state: First. The arpent used in the French Canadian colonies in their early history, was the same as the one in use at the present day. Second. The arpent, which is still the legal measure in all the seigniories of the country, the Province of Quebec, is the arpent de Paris, equal to 180 *pied de Roi* French feet, or to 191.85 English feet. Third. The French league is equal to 84 arpents de Paris. We must not forget that the present French system (metric) is not the French Canadian system used now and existing since the beginning of our country, i. e., 1608. The old system is well known:

1 arpent equals 160 *pied de Roi*.  
84 arpents equal 1 league.  
28 arpents equal 1 mile.

"This is our legal measure in use in all our Province. In France it is quite different. Yours truly,

N. E. DIONNE."

Mr. George M. Wrong, Professor of History in the University of Toronto, and editor of *Review of Historical Publications* relating to Canada, writes that: "M. Dionne may be regarded as an authority on these matters," and he has consulted others also.

Mr. Douglas Brynmer, Public Archivist of the Dominion of Canada, says, in a letter dated:

Ottawa, May 20th, 1897.

\* \* \* "There were several varieties of league; but the one that Charlevoix undoubtedly meant was the ordinary league of 84 arpents. That will give 3.051 plus 5220/5280th statute miles. You need have no hesitation in assuming Charlevoix's league to be 3.052 statute or English miles. Yours truly,  
"DOUGLAS BRYNMER.

Mr. Jared Sparks, in his "Life of Father Marquette," also in his "Life of LaSalle," estimates that the league was equal to three English miles.

I need hardly say that the authorities agree as to the length of the league in vogue in the colonies of New France. Statements to the effect that the French posting league of 2.42 English miles was the one used in New France seem to be without foundation, and was not used in the Colonies at all so far as I can learn from Canadian authorities. The posting league was a short league and not a legal measure. The editor of the "Century Dictionary" says in a letter dated, June 5, 1897: "It was naturally taken advantage of in agreements about the hiring of horses and conveyances."

We will now proceed with the quotations from the writings of the explorers and others.

From the "Description de la Louisiane," par le R. P. Louis Hennepin, beginning at page 112, and citing only that pertaining particularly to the St. Joseph-Kankakee river portage:

"Nous embarquâmesle troisieme Decembre, avec trente hommes, dans huit Canots & nous remontâmes la riviere des Miamis faisant nostre route au Sud est durant environ vingt-cinq liués, nous ne pûmes reconnoistre le Portage que nous devoins faire de nos canots & de tout l'equipage pour aller nous embarquer a la source de la riviere Siegnelay & comme nous estions montez plus haut en canot sans reconnoistre le lieu où nous devions marcher par terre pour prendre cette autre Riviere qui se vavendre aux Islinois, nous fismes halte, pour attendre le Sieur de la Salle, qui estoit allé par terre à la decouverte, & comme il ne revenoit point nous ne seavions quelle resolution prendre."

Page 117. "Nostre Sauvage estoit reste derriere nous pour chasser & ne nous trouvant point au portage il monta plus haut,

& nous vint dire qu'il falloit descendre la Riviere l'on envoya avec luy tous nos canots, & je restay avec le Sieur de la Salle qui estoit fort fatigue."

Page 118. "Nous joignimes nos gens le lendemain au portage, ou le Pere Gabriel avoit fait plusieurs Croix sur des arbres pour nous le faire reconnoistre. \* \* \* Cet endroit est scitue au bord d'une grande campagne, a l'extremite de laquelle du coste du Couchaut il y a un Village de Miamis, Mascoutens & Oiaton ramaslez ensemble."

Page 119. "La Riviere Seignelay qui passe aux Islinois prend sa source dans une campagne au milieu de beaucoup de terres tremblantes, Sur les quelles on pent a peine marcher, cette Riviere n'est Eloignie que d'une lieue & demie de celle des Miamis, & ainsi nous transportames tout nostre equipage avec nos Canots par un chemin que l'on ballisa pour la facilite de ceux qui viendroient apres nous, apres avoir laisse au portage de la Riviere des Miamis, ains qu'au Fort que l'on avoit construit a son embouchure des lettres pour servir d'instruction a ceux qui devoient nous venir joindre dans la barque au nombre de vingt-cinq."

Page 120. "La Riviere Seignelay est navigable pour des canots a cent pas de sa source & elle s'augmente de telle sorte en peu de temps, qu'elle est Presque aussi large & plus profonde que la Marne detours quoy que son courant soit assez fort, Qu'arpes avoir vogué une journee entiere on trouvoit quelquefois que nous n'avions pas avance plus de deux lieues, en droit ligne on ne voyoit aussi loin que la veué pouvoit s'etendre que des Marais de jones & des aulnes, nous n'eussions pû trouver a nous cabanner durant plus de quarante lieues de chemin, sans quelques mottes de terres glaces, sur lesquelles nous."

From Shea's translation of Hennepin's "Description de la Louisiane," pages 135-141: "We embarked on the 3rd of December with thirty men, in eight canoes, and ascended the river of the Miamis, taking our course to the south-east for about



From Hennepin's Map, 1683.

twenty-five leagues. We could not make out the portage which we were to take with our canoes and all our equipage in order to go and embark at the source of the river Seignelay (Theakiki), and as we had gone higher up in a canoe without discovering the place where we were to march by land to take the other river which runs by the Illinois, we halted to wait for the Sieur de La Salle, who had gone exploring on land; and as he did not return we did not know what course to pursue. I begged two of our most alert men to penetrate into the woods and fire off their guns, so as to give him notice of the spot where we were waiting for him. Two others ascended the river, but to no purpose, for the night obliged them to retrace their steps. The next day I took two of our men in a lightened canoe, to make greater expedition and to seek him by ascending the river, but in vain; and at four o'clock in the afternoon we perceived him at a distance; his hands and face all black with the coals and wood that he had lighted during the night, which was cold. He had two animals of the size of muskrats hanging to his belt, which had a very beautiful skin, like a kind of ermine, which he killed with blows of a stick without these little animals taking flight, and which often let themselves hang by the tail from branches of trees; and as they were very fat our canoe men feasted on them. He told us that the marshes that he met with obliged him to make a wide sweep, and as moreover he was hindered by the snow, which was falling rapidly, he was unable to reach the bank of the river before two o'clock at night. He fired two gun-shots to notify us, and no one having answered him, he thought the canoes had gone ahead of him, and kept on his way along and up the river. After marching in this way more than three hours he saw fire on a mound, which he ascended brusquely, and after calling two or three times; but instead of finding us asleep, as he expected, he saw only a little fire among some brush and under an oak tree; the spot where a man had been lying down on some dry herbs, and who had apparently gone off at the noise which he had heard. It was some Indian who had gone there in ambush to surprise and kill some of his enemies along the river. He called to him in two or three languages, and at last, to show him that he did not fear him, he cried that he was going to sleep in his place. He renewed the fire, and, after warming himself well, he took steps to guarantee himself against surprise by cutting down around him a quantity of bushes, which, falling across those that remained standing, blocked the way so that no one could approach him without making considerable noise and awaking him. He then extinguished his fire and slept, although it snowed all night. Father Gabriel and I begged the Sieur de La Salle not to leave his party as he had done, showing him that the whole success of our voy-

age depended on his presence. Our Indian had remained behind to hunt, and not finding us at the portage he went higher up and came to tell us that we would have to descend the river. All our canoes were sent with him, and I remained with Sieur de La Salle, who was very much fatigued, and as our cabin was composed only of flag-mats, it took fire and would have burnt us had I not promptly thrown off the mats, which served as a door to our little quarters, and which was all in flames. We joined our party the next day at the portage, where Father Gabriel had made several crosses (blazes) on the trees that we might recognize it. We found there a number of buffalo horns and the carcasses of those animals, and some canoes that the Indians had made of buffalo skin to cross the river with their load of meat. This place is situated on the edge of a great plain, at the extremity of which, on the western side, is a village of Miamis, Mascoutens and Oiaton (Wees) gathered together. The river Seignelay (Theakiki), which flows to the Illinois, rises in a plain in the midst of much boggy land, over which it is not easy to walk. This river is only a league and a half distant (4.57 miles) from that of the Miamis, and thus we transported all our equipage and our canoes by a road which was marked for the benefit of those who might come after us, after leaving at the portage of the Miamis river, as well as at the fort which we had built at its mouth, letters, which were hung on the trees at the pass to serve as a guide to those who were to come and join us by the barque, to the number of twenty-five. The river Seignelay is navigable



VIEW OF LA SALLE'S LANDING.  
Photographed in 1894.

for canoes to within a hundred paces of its source, and it increases to such an extent in a short time that it is almost as broad and deeper than the Marne. It takes its course through vast marshes, where it winds about so, though its current is pretty strong, that after sailing on it for a whole day we sometimes found that we had not advanced more than two leagues in a straight line. As far as the eye could reach nothing was to be seen but marshes full of flags and alders. For more than forty leagues of the way we could not have found a camping ground, except for some hummocks of frozen earth upon which we slept and lit our fire."

La Salle says, in his diary of his second trip through this region: "That on the 17th of November, 1680, having made the portage, which is two leagues (6.1 miles) long, when the waters are low."

Tonty, in his account of the trip, written November 14, 1684, says: "After having ascended the river of the Miamis about twenty-seven leagues, and having nobody to guide us to find the portage which goes to the River Illinois, M. de La Salle walked by land, with the intention of finding one. Night came upon us and we took to shelter, but M. de La Salle being entangled between a swamp and the firm ground was obliged to make the tour. Having seen a fire he went to it, hoping to find some savages and get shelter with them. He cried out like a savage, but finding no one answered him, he entered the brushwood where the fire was. He found nobody, and it was surely the hut of some warrior who had been afraid of him. He lay down with two firebrands before him, although it was very cold, and even snowed. He joined me the next day. There arrived also a savage hunter of La Salle's, who told us that the people whom I had left were waiting for us at the portage, which was two leagues below us. The portage found and people reassembled, that caused us great joy."

A stylized, handwritten signature of the word "Tonty" in a cursive script.

Tonty, in his memoir on the "Discovery of the Mississippi," says: "M. de La Salle sent his boat back to Niagara to fetch the things he wanted and embarked in a canoe; continued his voyage to the Miamis river and there commenced to build a house. In the meantime I came up with the deserters and brought them back to within thirty leagues of the Miamis river, where I was obliged to leave my men in order to hunt, our provisions failing

us. I then went on to join M. de La Salle. When I arrived he told me he wished that all the men had come with me, in order that he might proceed to the Illinois. I therefore retraced my way to find them; but the violence of the wind forced me to land



From Franquelin's Map, 1688.

and our canoe was upset by the violence of the waves. It was, however, saved; but everything that was in it was lost, and for want of provisions we lived for three days on acorns. I sent word of what had happened to M. de La Salle, and he directed me to join him. I went back in my little canoe, and as soon as I arrived we ascended twenty-five leagues as far as the portage, where the men whom I had left behind joined us. We made the portage, which extends about two leagues, and came to the source of the Illinois river. We embarked there descending the river for one hundred leagues and arrived at the village of the savages."

Le Clercq, in his "Establishment of the Faith in New France," says; "Meanwhile, on the 18th of September, the Sieur de La



VIEW ON ST. JOSEPH RIVER, OPPOSITE LA SALLE'S LANDING.

Salle, with our Fathers and seventeen men, continued their route in canoes, by Lake Dauphin, to the mouth of the river of the Miamis, where they arrived on the 1st of November. This place had been appointed a rendezvous for twenty Frenchmen, who came by the opposite shore, and also for the Sieur de Tonty, who had been sent by the Sieur de La Salle to Missilimakinak on another expedition. The Sieur de La Salle built a fort<sup>1</sup> there, to put his men and property in safety against the assaults of the Indians. Our religious Fathers soon had a bark cabin erected to serve as a chapel, where they exercised their ministry for French and Indians until the 3rd of December following, when, leaving four men in the fort, they went in search of the portage which would bring them to the Seignelay river, which descends to the River Mississippi. They embarked on this river to the number of thirty or forty persons, by which, after a hundred or a hundred and twenty leagues sail, they arrived toward the close of December at the greatest village of the Illinois, composed of about four or five hundred cabins, each of five or six families."

In the memoir on "The Indians Between Lake Erie and the Mississippi," Paris Documents, 1718, published in the Colonial History of the State of New York, Vol. IX., page 289, we find the following statement: "The River St. Joseph is south of Lake Michigan, formerly the Lake of Illinois. Many take this river to the Rocks, because it is convenient, and they thereby avoid the portages des Chaines and des Perches."

We now come to the letters of Charlevoix,<sup>2</sup> written to the Madame la Duchesse de Lesdiquieres. We quote first, from the letter of August 16, 1721, dated River St. Joseph: "It is eight days since I arrived at this post, where we have a mission, and where there is a commandant with a small garrison. The com-

1. In his Royal Charter, La Salle was given permission to establish Forts. It was his intention to make this place at the mouth of the Miamis river the base of operation and his vessel's principal port on Lake Michigan. On the map which accompanies Hennepin's work, "Description de la Louisiane" La Salle's Fort is called Fort Des Miamis. Charlevoix, who visited the St. Joseph river in 1721, makes no mention of any Fort at the mouth of the river either in his "Letters to the Madame la Duchesse de Lesdiquieres" or in his "History of New France." There is no record of any fort at the mouth of the river except that built by La Salle. After his final departure from this region the site was never used as a military or trading post. It was known as the harbor of the St. Joseph river, and by sailors as late as 1834, as Saranac and Newburyport. In March 1834, the little settlement was incorporated as the village of St. Joseph, the name of the present beautiful city.
2. Pierre Francois Xavier Charlevoix.



mandant's house, which is a very sorry one, is called the Fort,<sup>1</sup> from its being surrounded with an indifferent palisado, which is pretty near the case with all the rest. We have here two villages of Indians, one of the Miamis and the other of the Pottawatomies; both of them mostly Christian, but they have been for a long time without any pastor. The missionary who has been lately sent to them will have no small difficulty in bringing them back to the exercise of their religion. The River St. Joseph comes from the south and discharges itself into Lake Michigan (the eastern shore of which is a hundred leagues in length), and which you are obliged to sail along before you come to the entry of the river. You afterwards sail up twenty leagues in it before you reach the fort, which navigation requires great precaution."

I will state that this distance, by actual survey of the west bank of the river, is a trifle over fifty-nine miles. It is estimated in Perkins' "Annals of the West," at sixty miles.

Charlevoix, in his letter to the Duchesse, dated on the Source of the Theakiki, the 17th of September, 1721, says "MADAME:— I did not expect to take my pen so soon again to write to you, but my guides have just broken their boat, and here I am again de-



From Charlevoix's Map. Published 1744.

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1. Fort St. Joseph was located one mile south of the present city of Niles, Michigan, on the east bank of the St. Joseph river. Near this site was a village of the Miami Indians. Father Avenau of the Society of Jesus established a mission there in 1690. February 15th, 1694, Governor Denonville granted this society a concession of 20 arpents along the St. Joseph river by 20 arpents in depth, at such a spot as they should deem most suitable to erect a chapel and house. Sieur de Courtemanche with some Canadian soldiers were at the mission in 1695, and protected the missionaries from the Iroquois. In 1697, a Military Post was established there. From that time it was known in history as Fort St. Joseph, until it was destroyed by the Spanish Expedition from St. Louis in 1781.

layed for a whole day in a place where I find nothing to excite the curiosity of a traveler, so I have nothing better to do than to yield myself to the pleasure of talking with you. I believe I made you understand in my last that I had two routes to choose between for reaching the Illinois. The first was to return to Lake Michigan, to follow its southern course, and to enter the little river of Chicago. After having ascended it five or six leagues one passes into that of the Illinois by means of two portages, the longer of which is only five-quarter leagues; but as this river is, however, only a brook at this place, I was warned that at this season I should not find in it enough water for my boat. Therefore I took the other route, which, indeed, has its inconveniences and is not nearly as agreeable, but it is surer. I left yesterday the fort of St. Joseph river, and I ascended this river about six leagues I disembarked on the right, walked five-quarter leagues, first following the edge of the water, then across the fields into a great prairie, all sprinkled with little tufts of woodland, which have a very beautiful effect. It is called 'la Prairie de Tete de Bœuf,' because there was found there, so they say, an ox's head, which was monstrous in size. Why may there not have been giants among these animals also? I encamped in a beautiful place called 'le Fort des Renards,' because the wolves, that is the Outagamis, had there not long ago a village fortified in their way. This morning I went a league farther into the prairie; my feet almost constantly in water. There I found a sort of pond which communicates with several others of different sizes, the largest of which is only one hundred paces in circuit. These are the sources of a river called Theakiki, which, by corruption, our Canadians name Kiakiki. *Theak* means a wolf. I no longer recall in what language, but this river bears that name because the Mahangans, who are also called the Wolves, formerly took refuge there. We put our boat, which two men had carried up to this point, into the second of these sources and we embarked, but we had scarcely enough water to keep afloat. Ten men would make in two days a straight and navigable canal, which would save much trouble and ten or twelve leagues of road, for the river, at its issue from the sources, is so narrow, and it is necessary to continually turn so sharply, that at each instant one is in danger of breaking his boat, as has just happened to us."

*P. M. x. Del Harter oxy.*

Daniel Coxe, in his "Description of the English Province of Carolina," published in 1722, gives the distance from the St. Joseph river to the Theakiki as six miles.

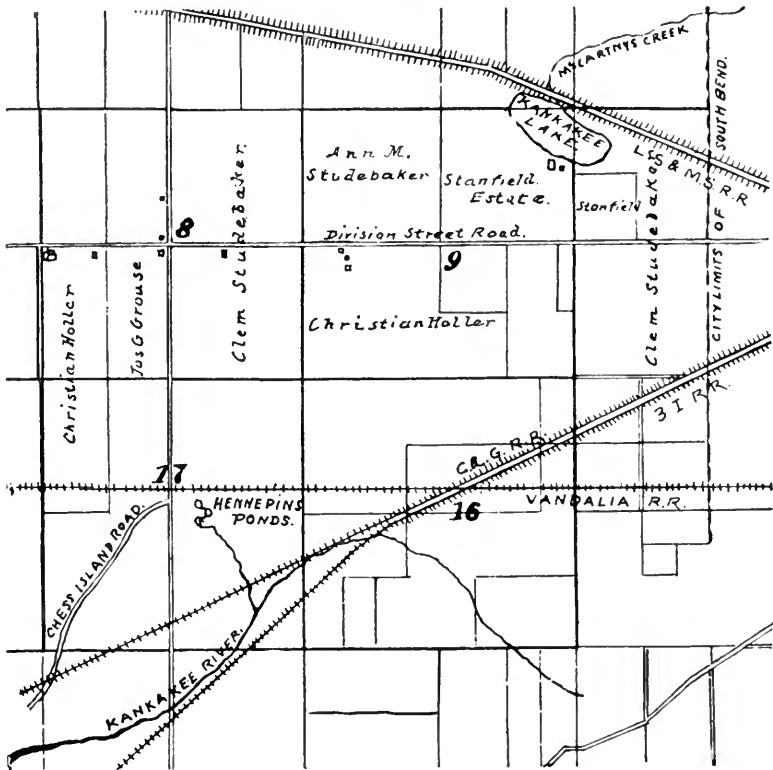
These are the data from which the historians obtained their knowledge of the portage; and it seems that the citations given cover everything they mention, and without doubt are the original sources of their information.

From the account of Charlevoix, we know that the distance from the mouth of the river to Fort St. Joseph was estimated by him at twenty leagues, or sixty-one English miles. The actual distance by survey is fifty-nine miles. We know from Hennepin's and Tonty's account, and indirectly from Charlevoix's account, that the portage was obscured and hard to find, which would not have been the case if it had been well defined and marked by the mouth of a creek or brook.<sup>1</sup> From the accounts of Hennepin and Tonty, we know that La Salle's party passed the portage. Tonty says that they ascended twenty-seven leagues, and that they descended two leagues to the portage, making the distance from the mouth of the river twenty-five leagues, or five leagues from the site of Fort St. Joseph, as located by Charlevoix. Charlevoix states in his letter of September 17, 1721: "I ascended the river about six leagues;" and he evidently passed the portage landing as had La Salle and his followers. He further states that the walked five-quarter leagues, three and three-quarter miles, first following the edge of the water. We can estimate the distance he traveled along the edge of the water quite closely, as he states that the five-quarter leagues brought him to the fortified Indian village. This village was two and one-half miles from the portage landing and on the western verge of the prairie; hence Charlevoix must have descended the river from a point about opposite St. Mary's Academy; one and one-quarter miles to the portage landing. This is about the only place he could have walked along the river's edge; for below the landing, the western bank of the river is high and precipitous, and above it is, in the main, low and terraced.

Both Hennepin and Charlevoix state that the source of the Kankakee was in a prairie or plain, and that the land was wet and boggy, over which it was not easy to walk. Charlevoix says of the last league, three miles, "my feet were almost constantly in the water." Parkman says that the soil quaked beneath their

1. It has been suggested that the portage landing might have been at Witters Branch, 23 chains and 50 links, (1551 feet) down the river from the landing to the Kankakee as located by the government surveyor, (see pages 15 and 16 of this pamphlet) and thus necessitating a longer portaging. No Indian or *coureur de bois*, and hardly any one else, for that matter, would make a landing for a portage of four to six miles, that would compel him to carry his canoe, etc., a foot farther then necessary. It follows that La Salle did not ask his mutinous men to do so.

# THE ST. JOSEPH-KANKAKEE PORTAGE



Outline Drawing Showing Location of Hennepin's Ponds—The Kankakee End of the Portage.

tread and all around were pools of glistening water. Hennepin states that this point is only a league and a half, 4.57 miles, distant from the Miamis river. This corresponds to the distance measured along the portage trail, as located by the Government Survey, and verified by such well known surveyors as Mr. William Rosencrans, Mr. Fred Keller, and the late Milton B. Stokes. At a point a little to the northeast of the middle of Section 17, Township 37 North, Range 2 East, in boggy and wet ground, prominently and clearly indicated, are the basins of three small pools or ponds, the largest of which is not over one hundred paces in circumference. They are the sources of the crooked and winding northwest branch of the Kankakee river. These ponds are, without any doubt, the ones referred to by Hennepin and Charlevoix, as the place where they launched their canoes.

La Salle on his second trip states that the portage was two leagues (six miles) when the water was low, which would indi-

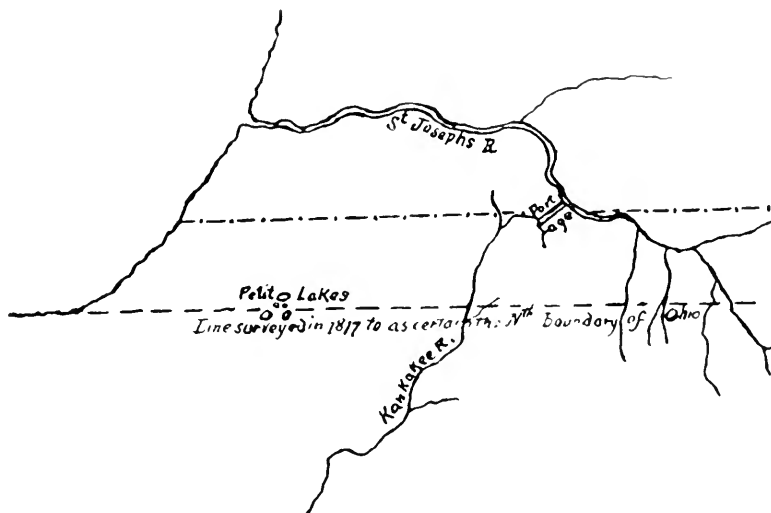
cate that La Salle on this trip embarked on the Kankakee between Sections 19 and 20, Township 37 North, Range 2 East.

It has been suggested that Charlevoix might have continued his journey directly west one league, three miles, from the fortified Indian village. If this had been the case, he would have gone through forest and over dry rolling land, bringing him to the west of Beaver Lake;<sup>1</sup> the lake farthest north of the three, known as Chain Lakes. The outlet of these lakes is the Grapevine Creek, which flows toward the south for a distance of ten miles through the Grapevine woods before it empties into the Kankakee. However, Charlevoix states distinctly that after leaving the fortified Indian village, he walked one league farther into the prairie, with his feet almost constantly in the water. This statement is the best evidence that Charlevoix did not go by way of Chain Lakes and the Grapevine Creek; but did go through the boggy and marshy ground in the vicinity of the shallow Cranberry, Crill and Mud Lakes, in Section 5 and 8, to the ponds, and to the landing on the Kankakee, as made by Hennepin, Tonty and La Salle, in their portage of December, 1679.

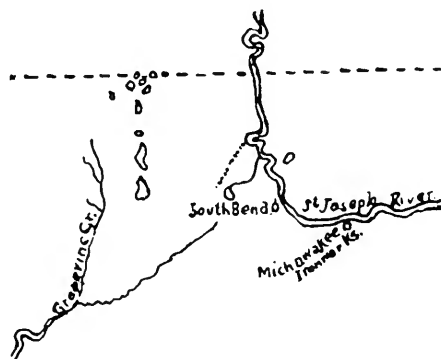
Charlevoix evidently did not follow the portage from river to river, as we have every reason to think that La Salle's party with their canoes and heavy burdens did. He came to this country mainly to visit and report on the condition of the Indian missions; a good reason for his visit to the fortified Indian village on the western verge of the prairie. Finding the village abandoned, he the next day continued his journey southward, and together with his two companions, launched their canoe on the Kankakee. The detour making a distance traveled five and one-half miles, which is longer than the regular trail followed between the two landing places.

In conclusion we can confidently infer that the trail as used by La Salle and the early French explorers and by them made historic, commenced at the landing on the St. Joseph river, at the place indicated in Brookfield's survey, and thence leading to the southwest to the ponds which were the source of the northwest branch of the Kankakee.

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1. This little lake to the south of Fairview Chapel in Warren Township, St. Joseph County, was in 1829 over three thousand feet in circumference. In 1839 Mr. Charles Woolverton, enlarged its outlet; later the partially reclaimed land was ditched, making it most desirable pasture land. There still remain, however, two or three wet spots, formerly the deep holes in this little lake, and though they are connected by a ditch with the former outlet, these places remain moist and marshy. I call attention to the above facts, because these wet spots have been mentioned as the pools or ponds referred to by Hennepin and Charlevoix.



From H. S. Tanner's Map of Ohio and Indiana, Published at Philadelphia, 1819.



From John Farmer's Map of Indiana, Published at Detroit, 1835.













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THE ST. JOSEPH-KANKAKEE PORTAGE 3D ED. S



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